

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing amendment and reconsideration and withdrawal of the final rejection is respectfully requested with respect to all of the claims now in the application, (i.e. Claims 37-47, 49-61, 63-67 and 69-72) in view of the following remarks.

Initially, by this amendment, Applicant has amended Claim 61 to provide proper antecedent basis for the term "the cylinders."

Furthermore, by this Amendment, Applicant has amended the claims to further highlight the novel construction and steps of the invention and better distinguish it over the prior art. In particular, Applicant has added the subject matter of now cancelled dependent Claim 68 into independent Claims 70-72. These amended claims now define a joint assembly and method, such that a stronger and more secure joint is formed and one which is more aesthetically pleasing. In the joint assembly, the fastener aperture within the panel has at its open end, an aperture to receive a nut 31 (See Figs. 2-3 and paragraph spanning pgs. 7-8). As best seen in Fig. 2 which is enclosed herewith as Exh. A, the fastener 32 has a screw-thread which engages with the thread on the nut 31 as the fastener is inserted. As the screw 32 is tightened, the inner wall is put under compression and the panel and the inner wall are pushed apart. Furthermore, a load arises which tends to push the panel 14 against the outer wall.

Thus, when the fastener 32 is screwed into the aperture, it performs two functions: firstly, the end of the fastener pushes the outer wall of the panel against the panel receiver. Secondly, the nut is pulled against the inner wall of the panel receiving member. The action of the nut tends to push the inner wall away from the outer wall and the tension combined with the pushing formed, strengthens the joint (See pg. 8, ¶1). If required, adhesives 20 may be inserted into the small gap which opens up between the inner wall of the panel joining member and the panel (See, Fig. 1). Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the prior art does not disclose or suggest the structure or steps of the claims, as now amended.

Turning to the §102 rejection, U.S. Patent No. 3,675,954 to Konig fails to disclose or suggest the claims of the present invention, as now amended. In particular, the panel in Konig is not urged against the outer sidewall of the panel joining member and does not disclose the nut required by the claims, as now amended. Rather, as seen in Fig. 7 enclosed herewith as Exh. B, Konig discloses a panel joining system to form a wall in a building in which connecting flanges 9 and 10 are used to hold panels 5 together. In particular, the panels 5 are provided with undulating edge profiles 6 to engage a complementary profile on the connecting flange 9 or 10. The flange and panel are aligned and a screw fastener 11 is passed through the flange into a cavity in the panel. The end of the screw fastener engages a threaded portion on a clip fastener located on the end of the panel. As the screw fastener progresses therefore, the panel is drawn towards the flange to give a tight fit. In order to obtain

an effective joint a flange is secured in similar fashion to the opposite side of the panel.

However, the panel joining assembly in Konig functions in a completely different fashion to that of the present invention. Firstly, in Konig the screws act to pull the flange and one side of the panel together. This is the opposite to the present invention which pushes one side of the panel against the panel joining member while securing the fastener to the inner wall of the panel joining member and at the same time easing slightly the inner wall away from the panel due to the provision of the nut. Therefore, Konig fails to disclose or suggest urging the outer surface of the panel against the outer sidewall of the panel joining member and the nut which serves to push the inner wall away from the outer wall, of the panel joining member as required by the claims. Furthermore, Konig, because of its manner of action, requires two separate flanges which are separately attachable to join the panels together which is not a feature of the present invention.

In regard to the §102 and §103 rejections in light of U.S. Patent No. 3,885,765 to Richards, this reference alone or in combination with the secondary references, fails to disclose or suggest the features of the claims, as now amended. In particular, Richards is directed to a means of assembling furniture frames, but can also be used for room dividers. The disclosure which is closest to the present invention relates to Figures 3-6. In the embodiment shown in Fig. 4 which is enclosed as Exh. C, a grub screw is screwed through one wall 33 of a leg 30 of the furniture and into a groove

unit 39 in that wall. It engages the walls of a specially formed transverse groove 39, and the engaging action acts to push the rail 37 against the opposite wall 34 of the leg and also to push the rail against the inner surface 40 of the leg 30. It is not clear whether the grub screw engages the curved surface 39 of the groove or simply (via its taper) an edge wall of the groove.

Richards fails to disclose or suggest urging the outer surface of the panel against the outer sidewall of the panel joining member and the nut which serves to push the wall away from the outer wall, as required by the claims. Particularly, the differences between the present invention and Richards is that firstly, there is no indication of counterforces on the wall through which the grub screw passes and consequently of the use of this force to give a better joint. If such a force were to be utilized, then the whole of that force would be held in the threads with the result that over time, the threads would weaken, loosening the fit. While this might be acceptable in furniture, it is not in respect of packing cases or secure cases for which the present invention can be used. Furthermore, it fails to disclose or suggest the nut in the claims as now amended. Applicant's invention as now set forth in the claims, uses a nut which is pulled against the inner wall of the panel joining member thus spreading the load of any force borne by the inner wall. The risk of wear and loosening is therefore greatly reduced.

Furthermore, the various secondary references cited in combination with Richards fail to correct the basic and crucial deficiencies noted above. As a result of

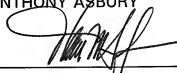
the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the independent claims, as now amended, are neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art, and as a result, the claims dependent thereon are also allowable as a result of their dependency.

Finally, Applicant hereby requests a one-month extension of time in which to respond to the outstanding Office Action. Credit Card payment in the amount of \$65.00 is enclosed to cover the official fee. Any fee deficiency or overpayment may be charged or credited to Deposit Account No. 50-3990.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention as now set forth in Claims 37-47, 49-61, 63-67 and 69-72 are patentable over the cited art and therefore entry of the foregoing amendment, withdrawal of the final rejection and allowance of the aforesaid claims at an early date is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosures: Exhibits A-C

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EXHIBIT A

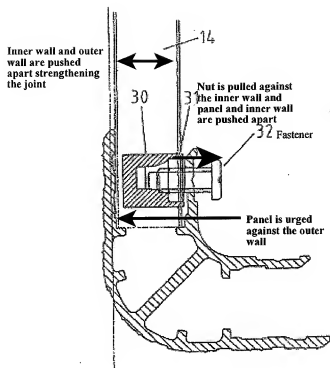


FIG. 2 of the present application

EXHIBIT B

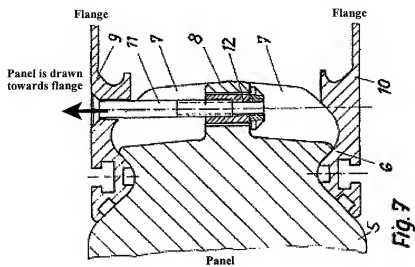


Fig. 7 of Konig

EXHIBIT C

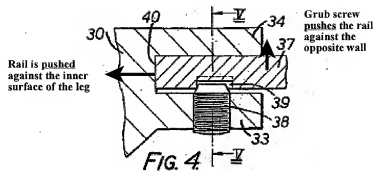


Fig. 4 of Richards